

## **“*Pseudomonas* Folliculitis”** **(*Pseudomonas aeruginosa*)**

*Disease Fact Sheet Series*

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### **What is *Pseudomonas* folliculitis?**

*Pseudomonas* folliculitis is an inflammation of the hair follicles caused by infection with the bacteria *P. aeruginosa*. It has been reported in persons using hot tubs, whirlpools, saunas, swimming pools, waterslides and physiotherapy pools.

### **Who gets *Pseudomonas* folliculitis?**

Any person exposed to water contaminated with *P. aeruginosa* can get *Pseudomonas* folliculitis.

### **Where is *P. aeruginosa* found?**

*Pseudomonas aeruginosa* thrives in warm and moist areas and is commonly found in soil, sinks and drains, shower-floors, carpeting and even tap water.

### **What are the symptoms of *Pseudomonas* folliculitis?**

*Pseudomonas* folliculitis first appears as itchy bumps and develops into dark red tender nodules and/or small pus-filled pimples. The eruptions typically involve the trunk and upper parts of the arms and legs. The rash can be extensive and may affect all areas of the body except the palms of the hands and soles of the feet. The rash may be accompanied by headache, nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramps, sore throat, rhinitis, sore eyes, and fever.

The rash may be more severe under areas covered by a swimsuit where the material held the contaminated water in contact with the skin for a longer period of time.

### **How soon after exposures do symptoms of *Pseudomonas* folliculitis appear?**

The incubation period for “*Pseudomonas* folliculitis” is usually 48 hours (range 8 hours to 5 days) after exposure to contaminated water.

### **How can *Pseudomonas* folliculitis be diagnosed?**

*Pseudomonas aeruginosa* can often be cultured from pus-filled pimples on the skin.

### **What is the treatment for *Pseudomonas* folliculitis?**

The rash associated with this infection will usually go away on its own and treatment may not be needed. “Anti-itch” medications may be used to control the itching.

(Over)

**Why are whirlpools and hot tubs favorable for *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*?**

- Warmer water temperatures enhance the growth of *P. aeruginosa*.
- Warmer water temperatures of whirlpools and hot tubs promote the expansion of the pores of the hair follicles allowing entrance to bacteria.
- Organic matter commonly found on human skin provide nutrients for *P. aeruginosa* to grow and multiply.
- Turbulence in the water interferes with the maintenance of disinfectant levels, especially in whirlpools made of wood.

**How can *Pseudomonas folliculitis* be prevented?**

Proper maintenance and control of the pH and disinfectant levels will prevent the growth of "*Pseudomonas folliculitis*" in hot water supplies.